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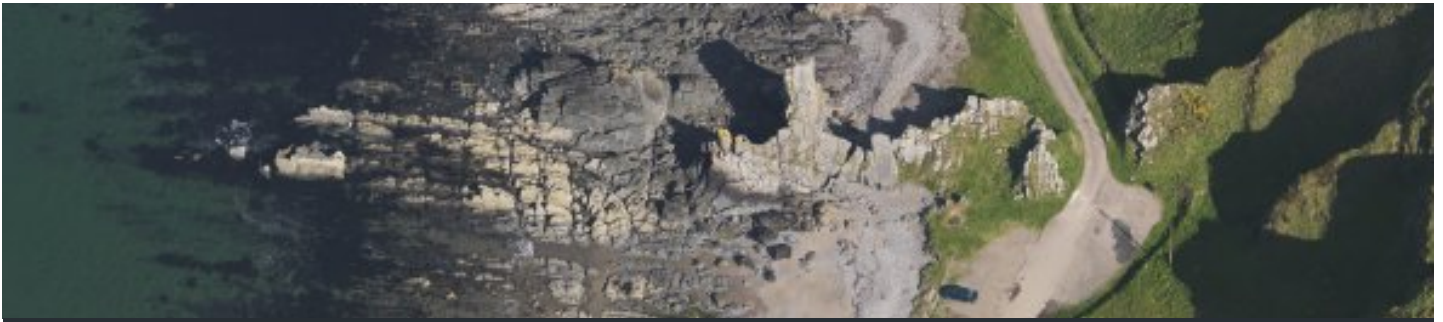


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## Tarlair Swimming Pool - Macduff





## Fading Grandeur

*Tarlair Swimming Pool is situated in a bay to the east of Macduff on Aberdeenshire's north coast. It is built in an Art Deco style and opened in 1931 at the height of the outdoor swimming boom. Its popularity continued until the 1970s but with declining visitor numbers and rising maintenance costs, it finally closed in 1995.*

*The outdoor swimming complex at Tarlair is tucked into the base of the sea cliff at the head of Loch Craig. Constructed out of concrete and painted white, it comprises three pools surrounded by curved walkways, a tea pavilion, changing rooms and kiosks. The three pools include a large swimming pool, located nearest the sea, a paddling pool and a boating pond. All the pools are tidal and are replenished by the sea at high tide, a feature relatively unusual for a pool of this size and scale. The complex was commissioned by Macduff Burgh Council in 1929; designed by John C Miller, the Burgh Surveyor for Macduff; and built by Robert Morrison and Son, a local contractor also from Macduff.*





## The Outdoor Pool Revolution

*During the 1920s and 30s, with rising public awareness of the potential benefits of physical activity and an outdoors lifestyle, scores of new outdoor swimming complexes were constructed across Scotland. As many of these, including Tarlair, were initiated by local councils, their design fell not to architects but to the local burgh engineers and surveyors. This prompted the architect Kenneth Cross to comment somewhat snootily that such swimming complexes were 'costly and unattractive in appearance'. Nevertheless, the design inspiration of many of the pools owes much to the Piscine Molitor, an Art Deco style indoor pool in Paris designed by the architect Lucien Pollet. Tarlair is an early example of this style.*

*Like that built at Tarlair, these complexes were much more than places to swim. Many had cafes, sunbathing terraces and viewing galleries. The pools themselves were often venues for diving and swimming competitions as well as aquatic entertainment shows. And for a time, these proved hugely popular - Portobello Open Air Swimming Pool had seating for up to 6000 spectators. Indeed the year before Tarlair closed it played host to a live concert from the Clydebank-based band Wet Wet Wet. A rather fitting name given the venue!*

*Sadly the shouts and laughter of bathers have long since disappeared at Tarlair and visitors today hear only the roar of the sea and the squawking of gulls. Yet while memories of hot summers and bathing in the pools begin to fade, Tarlair Swimming Pool still stands as testimony to the heyday and spectacle of open air bathing.*

*Further Reading:*

*Jane Smith (2005) Liquid Assets: The Lidos and Open Air Swimming Pools of Britain. English Heritage.*

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<https://canmore.org.uk/site/292976/macduff-tarlair-swimming-pool>

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?Authority=ASH&amp;amp;amp;refno=NJ76SW0098>



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